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ABSTRACT

It was not until the 1960's that the subject of higher education started to disturb governments, or the issue of government policy on higher education became a topic of national debate. Some thoughts on the likely evolution of British higher education to the 1980's and beyond are apparent after looking to: the Robbins Report of 1963, which proposed massive expansion of student numbers and "that courses of higher education be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so;" to the system as it is now; and finally to issues in North America and Europe. Since there is no agreement about the Good Society, and thus about aims and content, the mandate for the pragmatist is to create a variety of higher education institutions that can fulfill a variety of functions. The direction in which higher education should move is toward greater diversity and greater fairness between the sectors as well as more social justice. What we shall be talking about in 1985 is a system of post-school education in which systems of higher education throughout the world are already moving, and British higher education is set in the same direction. (Author)

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Beyond 1980: The Evolution of British Higher Education

Brian MacArthur

Address to the Annual General Meeting of the Joint University Council for Social and Public Administration, London University, January 3, 1975.

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FOREWORD

Almost eight years ago there was an international conference on the crisis in education which I had the honor to chair. At that meeting, one of the most persistent complaints of educators was the weakness of educational reporting. Having discounted the almost universal complaint on the part of those who do not get their proper position on the front page of their favorite newspaper, there still seemed to be the point that reporting on educational matters was the weak part of the educational enterprise.

How pleased those conferees would be if they could see the flowering of attention to higher education that has occurred since that time. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Change* in the United States, the educational edition of *Le Monde* in France, and certainly, the two great supplements of *The London Times–The Educational Supplement* and *The Higher Education Supplement.* The editors of these publications have become our most important professional commentators and critics. No one interested in educational development can afford to miss a single issue.

For those of us concerned with the international dimensions of higher education, the weekly *Times Higher Education Supplement* is perhaps unique. In a relatively short space of time it has come to occupy a central role in keeping the English-speaking world—or at least the English-reading world—informed about important developments. It is current, topical, informative and selects serious topics for discussion.

The editor of THES is one of the leading observers and students of higher education—Brian MacArthur. I spotted a full-page article of his in his own journal and found it was an abbreviated edition of a longer paper. On writing to him, he kindly agreed to permit the ICED to include the full original in our selected list of occasional papers.

Brian MacArthur has provided a sensitive and wise overview of higher education in Great Britain, but in doing so he has used a wide-angle lens that makes what he has to say important reading in other lands and for other cultures. The ICED is grateful to Brian MacArthur for writing this piece. We know that our growing company of special readers around the world will give this the careful study it deserves.

James A. Perkins, Chairman
International Council for
Educational Development

Beyond 1980: The Evolution of British Higher Education

As I settled down to consider this talk just before Christmas, there was a review in *The Observer* by A.J.P. Taylor of Eric Ashby and Mary Anderson's new book, "Portrait of Haldane," the social reformer who inspired the modern, civic university. "It tells a fascinating story," said Mr. Taylor, "for anyone interested in the *perhaps rather esoteric* subject of higher education." As the editor of a newspaper which seeks to survive by writing weekly about this perhaps rather esoteric subject, I naturally object—or perhaps I should apologize for what follows! A.J.P. Taylor, however, was only expressing a commonly held view.

Yet higher education is *not* an esoteric subject, even if it can seem so in some of the writing about it. Nearly £1,000 million a year is now spent on higher education. It involves 500,000 students reading full-time for degrees, at least a million parents, at least another 500,000 who would like it but can't get it, some 50,000 to 100,000 lecturers, and (a figure which may surprise you) three and a half million adults

engaged every year in some form of further education, on day-release or short courses or night classes, covering, as the Russell Report on Adult Education put it, everything from birdwatching, beekeeping, and barndancing, to badminton, Brecht, Bruckner, Beethoven, and the Bible. Some may scoff at the thought that such activities are genuinely "further" education, but they certainly point to a growing interest on the part of the British family in a creative and constructive use of its growing hours of recreation and leisure.

Apart from electronics and natural gas, higher education, moreover, was Britain's biggest growth industry in the sixties. Or, to summon a rather different authority, the *News of the World*, 'all human life is there'—and there from the cradle to the grave, since the activities of higher education touch on every aspect of life, whether it be scholarship, the arts and sciences, medicine and technology, industry, commerce or the professions or research, development and invention.

The subject of higher education also arouses great passions, for instance about the university. Let us take two examples, each of which bears on our theme this afternoon:

First, Clark Kerr, the former president of the University of California. This is what he has to say:*

> "The university is being called upon to educate previously unimagined numbers of students; to respond to the expanding claims of national service; to merge its activities with industry as never before; to adapt to and rechannel new intellectual currents.
>
> "Over the past thirty years nearly half our national growth can be explained by the greater education of our

**The Uses of the University*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

people and by better technology, which is also largely a product of the educational system.

> "So many of the hopes and fears of the American people are now related to our educational system and particularly to our universities—the hope for longer life, for getting into outer space, for a higher standard of living . . . For all these reasons and others, the university has become a prime instrument of national purpose."

Secondly, Eric Robinson, once deputy director of the NELP, and author of "The New Polytechnics:"

> "Sooner or later this country must face a comprehensive reform of education beyond school—a reform which will bring higher education out of the ivory towers and make it available to all. This will be achieved through a bloodier battle than that for the comprehensive reform of secondary education. In that battle the grammar school was the victim. In the next, the victim will be the university—the commanding height of British education."

SIGNIFICANCE OF ROBBINS REPORT

Clark Kerr was writing in 1963 and Eric Robinson in 1968. If we had been meeting 15 or 20 years ago, however, A.J.P. Taylor would have been right. It was not until the sixties that the subject of higher education started to disturb Governments, or the issue of Government policy on higher education became a topic of national debate. So what I want to do this afternoon is to look back a decade to the Robbins Report of 1963—to plot the development of the *system* of British higher education since then (and it was the Robbins Report which introduced the concept of a system), and to draw from the system as it is now, at the start of 1975, some

thoughts on its likely evolution to 1980 and beyond, drawing on North America and Europe for some ideas on the issues that will present themselves to universities, colleges and polytechnics, and to Whitehall and Westminster.

The main recommendation of the Robbins Report—its proposal for a massive expansion of student numbers—was accepted (and in a statement from 10 Downing Street) on the day of publication. So, too, was the Robbins axiom, 'that courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.' And, as the most recent Government announcement on student numbers indicated, the Robbins axiom still guides Government policy. The acceptance of these two recommendations was an important success. Yet they were its solitary successes.

The real significance of the Robbins Report is that it has been systematically repudiated since 1964, by Conservative as well as Labour Governments. In particular successive Governments have rejected the view that universities should be treated in isolation from the rest of the education service—its schools and colleges. They have also rejected the view that the most successful of the technical colleges should be enabled to become universities, on the example of the former Colleges of Advanced Technology. So there was no separate minister for the universities, as recommended, and no more new universities are likely to be established in Britain in this century. And there has been no unitary system, based wholly on the model of the university as the ideal.

This profound change of direction in Government policy was announced by Mr (Anthony R.) Crosland in two major speeches in 1966 and 1967. At Woolwich Polytechnic, he

said that no new universities would be set up for at least a decade and added: "Let us now move away from our snobbish, caste-ridden, hierarchical obsession with university status." A few months later he defended the Government's new policy in a speech at Lancaster University. Over 40 percent of students in full-time higher education were outside the universities, he said, and the Government had inherited a plural or binary system. There were also, in the Government's view, strong arguments on merit for maintaining this plural system. One was that there was a sense in which the other colleges were under more direct social control, since their system of Government enabled elected representatives and local authorities to maintain a stake in higher education. At a time of rapid expansion and changing ideas moreover, the Government did not want a monopoly situation in higher education, but a variety of institutions under different control. A unitary system would surely imply an omniscience which we did not possess. Variety and diversity was thoroughly healthy, and we should seek to preserve it.

What has happened since then is well known and has been well rehearsed. There was the creation of the 30 polytechnics, as comprehensive centres of full- and part-time work at degree and sub-degree level, with strong roots in their local communities (and the introduction of the term "comprehensive" to higher education should be noted). The Government decided that the Comptroller and Auditor General should have access to university accounts. There was the more detailed scrutiny and direction of universities' development plans by the UGC (University Grants Committee); and, in the seventies, the squeeze on university budgets—the 1972-77 quinquennium introduced a 2 percent economy factor instead of the previous 10 percent improvement factor to university budgets—and the decision, in effect, to merge the colleges of education with the polytechnics and to create a

powerful non-university sector of higher education, of equal size to the university sector, and with up to 100 institutions.

So the universities, instead of being more or less independent of the state and dominating the landscape, as the Robbins Report described the situation only ten years ago, are now considered by the Government as equal partners of the colleges and polytechnics. They remain dominant, powerfully dominant, in scholarship, research, and public esteem, but the Government has deliberately shrunk their position within the system. One prediction for the 1980s must be that the university sector will become still smaller a proportion of the system, while the non-university sector of polytechnics and liberal arts colleges will, with time (as did the colleges of advanced technology), and now that the salaries of their teachers are on a par with those in universities, grow in student esteem—especially if this is the aim of Government policy.

DEVELOPMENTS TO BE WATCHED

The role of universities in systems of higher education is being debated across the world and Britain is not isolated from the passions it arouses. Since we are looking ahead into the 1980s, it is worth considering some of the developments that are being mooted or even enacted, since most can be seen, if often only embryonically, in Britain.

Student numbers in Britain have risen dramatically—doubling every decade—from 105,000 in 1950 to 230,000 in 1960, to 516,000 in 1970, and the same expansion has occurred even more rapidly elsewhere. Student numbers have doubled in most European countries, most of whom were already ahead of Britain in the access to higher education they offered their 18-year-olds. The number of students in

the 24 OECD member countries increased from 6 to 14 million between 1960 and 1970. Students in the United States are now counted in millions: there were 8.5 million students in 2,827 institutions in 1970. The Carnegie Commission has shown that in 1970, one in three of the population of the United States aged over 25 had spent four years in high school, 10 percent had been to college for three years and another 10 percent for at least four years. Its estimate for 1980 is that 12 percent of the population will have experienced three years of higher education and that another 14 percent will have experienced four years. As Britain moves timidly and almost reluctantly towards admitting 17 percent of the 18-20-year-old age group to degree courses by 1980, it needs to be emphasised that the Carnegie figures apply to the total American population: more than half the 18-year-olds of the United States enter higher education.

All the experts, moreover, believe that the expansion of students numbers will continue. Simply projecting school enrolments today, for instance, according to Dr. Najman, the Yugoslav director of Unesco's division of higher education, there will be 30 million students in Europe by 1990. (Even Warfarin' won't keep them down, one cynical journalist muttered at the Unesco press conference.) And Jan Tinbergen, the Nobel prize-winning economist, estimates that the number of graduates in the OECD European labour force will grow from 7 million in 1965 to 21 million by the year 2000. Professor Gareth Williams, projecting forward from the British trend for the past 50 years, estimates that university entry rates in Britain will reach those already achieved by most other Western European countries in the 1980s and those of Japan and the United States by the 1990s.

Student expansion on this dramatic scale will be costly. If expansion continued at the same standards of teaching and

facilities as now, the budget for higher education would consume up to 20 percent of the gross national product of many European countries before the turn of the century. Another confident prediction can be that it will not. One example is the Netherlands, where the universities' Rector Magnificus once told me that unless the costs of higher education were cut, spending on university education in 1993 would consume the total education budget, which, in turn, would be consuming 27 percent of the national income. [At 1970 prices it was estimated for Britain that the university budget would double between 1970 and 1980, consuming nearly 2 percent of the British GNP.] Whether or not, moreover, the expansion of higher education is an imperative on governments, they have also to consider other priorities, not only within education—nursery schools, or adult literacy or compulsory day-release for young workers, for instance—but also within the general area of social policy—such as clearing the millions of slums, improving the social services, building more hospitals, or injecting more capital investment into industry.

Student expansion and its costs, set against other social policy priorities, are constraints on the development of higher education whose implications can easily be comprehended. There is also, however, the ideological debate, which is now adding still greater impetus to the demand for expansion, as well as the implication of a still higher demand on national budgets.

What the Crowther Report did for 15-to 18-year-olds, Newsom for the secondary modern schools and the Plowden Report for nursery and primary education, the Robbins Report—and more recently the James and Russell Reports—have done for further and higher education. Each in its turn defined and refined what was required of its sector of

education if it was to fulfil the ideal of equality of opportunity, in the case of Robbins by stating that the principle behind the provision of higher education should be to satisfy the demand of qualified students.

Yet even though equality of opportunity has been the guiding principle of national policy for at least two decades, research has again and again confirmed that university entry is still largely determined by the accident of social class at birth. The proportion of working class students in universities remains the same as in the 1930s, while it is falling in the polytechnics. So there has been *expansion*, but the experience of higher education has not been extended. Not, as is admitted, that this is the fault of academics or universities—the fault lies in the social conditions in which so many children are born and brought up—and most of the remedies need to be initiated elsewhere—in schools and in other areas of social policy. Universities, colleges and polytechnics nevertheless remain resolutely middle-class institutions, adding fuel to the aspiration for comprehensive institutions of higher education (which is what the polytechnics were intended to be).

Meanwhile, the debate has moved on.

According to most commentators, too much has been claimed for the power of education as an instrument for the wholesale reform of societies. As (A.H.) Halsey has noted, what appears to be happening is a general adjustment of the occupational structure such that entry to it is in the process of continuous upward redefinition of educational qualification. (Which is, in parenthesis, one reason why expansion will continue.)

A second consequence of the experience over the last decade in trying to bring about greater equality of educa-

tional opportunity has been a tacit change in the meaning assigned to the phrase "equality of educational opportunity." Its earlier meaning was equality of *access* to education. Its meaning has gradually become equality of *achievement*. In this interpretation, according to Halsey, a society affords equality of educational opportunity if the proportions of people from different social, economic or ethnic categories at all levels and in all types of education are more or less the same as the proportions of these people in the population at large. In this direction, as is Sweden's, American higher education is now moving.

Since the context of the debate about higher education has been enlarged by redefining the ideal of equality of opportunity, the needs of the 16-to 19-year-old-age group, whether in school, college or at work, and the needs of adults, are now significant considerations in all countries when they consider their policies for the development of higher education.

So one theme in particular is obsessing international educationalists. It is the theme of recurrent education or of lifelong learning: after the three Rs, the three Ls.

The proponents of lifelong education suggest that education should no longer be regarded as a monopoly of the young. The existence of programmes of advanced training only, or mainly, for the young should be reconsidered. Equally, the content of educational programmes even in primary schools should no longer be determined on the premise that schooling will stop when the student reaches a particular age. It should be determined and presented as if the individual will make recurrent use of educational facilities throughout a large part of his life.

This is, in effect, a view of education as a new kind of citizenship right adjusted to the realities of a rapidly changing society. The idea is of granting a claim on education to each individual which, in principle, he may choose to fit into his own life cycle and his preferences for patterns of work and recreation.

Apart from this argument of equality, there is also an argument of efficiency. This is that it is just not possible to put all the education that may be necessary to a man in his working lifetime into the first cycle of education–even if that first cycle lasts 20 years from nursery school to Ph.D. Also, if one limits instruction in new knowledge and new techniques to the young of today–say computers–it will be 40 years before all the working population acquire this advance, which, at today's rate of change of knowledge, is just not acceptable.

As Sir Kenneth Berrill, now head of the Government think tank, has said, it is clearly impossible to foresee for each young person all the skills, specialisms, and interests he might require during his working life, and it is impossible, too, to foresee all the changes in industrial structure which will occur. Consider, for instance, the rapid changes in the size of the labour force in agriculture, mining, textiles, shipbuilding, and railways. So retraining can often be the alternative to structural unemployment.

Several countries have already given statutory effect to recurrent education, in particular Sweden, France, and most of eastern Europe. Ontario is considering introducing a requirement of reevaluation every ten years to maintain registration for the purpose of professional practice. A report commissioned by Unesco, headed by Edgar Faure, said that

lifelong education should be the master concept for the educational policies of all Governments.

One means of redressing this inequity in Britain—and it is only an off-the-cuff idea—would be for the Government to say that adults born before 1957, who received only 9 or 10 years of compulsory education instead of the 11 years British children get now that the school-leaving age has been raised to 16, were entitled to an extra one or two years of free further education—if they wanted it. This could be taken up, with a grant, after, say, 10 or 15 years at work (which is already happening in Australia on a smaller scale).

One other major factor influencing society's estimation of the development of higher education (or of its constituent parts), will be its level of agreement with the aims of higher education as they are defined by academics and administrators within universities and polytechnics. One major reason for the repudiation of Robbins by British Governments, I suspect, was a belief that universities were unwilling or unable to take on some of the tasks predicated by some of society's new demands of British higher education; to put it another way, the aims enunciated by Robbins were no longer considered sufficiently comprehensive.

The Robbins Report enunciated four aims:

> Instruction in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour.
>
> What is taught should be taught in such a way as to promote the general powers of the mind.
>
> The advancement of learning. "The search for truth" it said, "is an essential function of institutions of higher education."

> The transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship. "We believe it is a proper function of higher education to provide in partnership with the family that background of culture and social habit upon which a healthy society depends."

Most of these aims have survived the turbulent sixties intact, although there is now, as might be expected, some quarrel with the aim of transmitting a common culture. Apart from suggesting that there was ov specialisation or an undue emphasis on learning facts, instead of cultivating the mind, the Grimond Report on Birmingham University, for instance, suggested that the aim of transmitting a common culture should be restated:

> "Fostering a capacity for critical analysis, intellectual scepticism and constructive, imaginative synthesis;
>
> "Assisting the growth of personal maturity and the ability to assume responsibility for moral choice;
>
> "Contributing to the educational and general well-being of the community through the application of knowledge and by the encouragement of creativity."

NEW HIGHER EDUCATION THEMES

What has happened since 1963 is that some new aims have been added to the tasks of higher education. The British Government, as has the Swedish, has decided that more emphasis should be put on the first: instruction in skills. As the White Paper of 1972 and Mrs Thatcher put it, and I quote the text, since it is an important clue to the Government's thinking:

> "Not far from the surface of most candidates' minds is

> the tacit belief that higher education will go far to guarantee them a better job. All expect it to prepare them to cope more successfully with the problems that will confront them in their personal, social and working lives.
>
> "It is important that the last and most widespread of the expectations should not be disappointed. The Government has sympathy with the sincere desire on the part of a growing number of students to be given more help in acquiring—and discovering how to apply—knowledge and skills related more directly to the decisions that will face them in their careers and in the world of personal and social action. This is what is meant by 'relevance'."

Social justice, broader education or a renewed emphasis on vocational courses are the new themes of governments across the world as they consider the future of higher education. They have now become explicit aims in many countries, as, for example, in the final report of the Carnegie Commission in the United States, which says that higher education must "spread greater equality of opportunity to all persons so that they can develop their capacities and their interests; and gradually and partially reduce inequalities in earned income as more persons are educated out of reliance solely on low-paying jobs and as labor market competition is increased among those persons with greater training." Higher Education should also "help train individuals and devise social means so that the power of the machine, the power of the massive organization, the power of entrenched leadership is less likely to overwhelm man; to help build strength in individuals to confront the more powerful technology and the more powerful social structures of modern society; to help avoid 1984." Quite a job!

Another set of aims, originally put forward by Sir Toby Weaver, the senior civil servant overseeing British higher education from 1964 to 1973, and accepted by the OECD, suggests that the experience of higher education should give students:

> "First, COMPETENCE, by which is meant the acquisition of specialised knowledge of a discipline or field of professional activity.
>
> "Second, a general capacity to place their specialised knowledge in a wider perspective of human understanding by developing the critical and constructive powers of the mind, which can be described as COMPREHENSION.
>
> "Third, a familiarity with, and a sensitivity to, the best that has been thought and said in the development of our civilised heritage, which could be summarised as CULTIVATION.
>
> "Fourth, the development of those special talents which enable each individual to make his unique contribution to the richness of life, which can be called CREATIVITY.
>
> "Fifth, the ability to enter into fruitful, cooperative and constructive relationships with their fellow men and women, which can be defined as COMMUNION.
>
> "Lastly, the capacity to apply their knowledge, skills and sympathies to the solution of personal, practical, professional and social problems, which can be summed up as CAPABILITY."

It is the last three, Creativity, Communion and Capability which reflect the student—and the industrialists'—concerns of the sixties.

As a final example, some Edinburgh students recently published a statement saying that the Robbins thinking was no longer an "adequate rationale" for the modern university. A system of higher education restricted to the most able, they argued, can only be justified if those graduating are committed to developing their abilities and to realising their expertise in *effective social action.* We believe, they said, that universities today are in a position to appreciate the value and social uses of knowledge—as well as the value of the tools which have long been in use—for the resolution of some of the crucial problems of our society and for the advancement of humanity: the case for the isolation of university from society no longer exists.

They wanted part-time degree courses for adults without entrance qualifications. The first option on one-tenth of university places, they said, should rest with mature students without the prescribed entrance qualifications, and a policy of positive discrimination in favour of working-class students should be introduced, with particular emphasis on students from the Edinburgh region.

Sceptics may mock the ideas of these Edinburgh students but some of them, on past precedent, will be members of Parliament and ministers in the 1980s and 1990s.

EVOLUTION OF BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION

Set in this international context of powerful ideas, high ideals and even higher finance, my own conclusions about the evolution of British higher education may seem timid, especially to the dreamers and the visionaries. My instinct

about British public policy, however, is that it proceeds essentially by reform rather than revolution. It plods along pragmatically much more than it leaps suddenly into new directions. Sir Toby Weaver, who ought to know, told an OECD Conference in 1973 that "the British Government did not think of education in terms of social engineering, nor as an instrument to be wielded by governments or educators for the radical reconstruction of society."

So what follows takes no account of the visions of the European futurologists, though most of it is already true of North America and increasingly of Western Europe.

Any vision, idealistic or pragmatic, must start with a prediction of the continuing expansion of British higher education, at least to the present European levels, where 20 to 30 percent of the 18-to 20-year-old age group enter universities or colleges, and probably towards the end of the century—if we survive 1975 and 1976 without a slump or the much predicted crash—to United States levels. One generation of graduates whets the appetite of the next, social policies towards the disadvantaged will create new demand, employers will want more graduates or will raise their requirements, and a society earning its survival from the sciences and advanced technology will require the relevant skills from its citizens, just as the good and the just society will want to extend the opportunity of higher education to more of them. As the Carnegie Report puts it, "The 'educational' revolution stands along with the 'industrial' and the 'democratic' revolutions as a major force in transforming the life of modern man in all Western societies, and in most others as well. The educational revolution supports both the technological base of the industrial revolution and the humanitarian base of the democratic revolution; and it is inseparable from both of them."

So, to use the analysis of Professor Martin Trow, Britain will move, as indeed it is already moving, from an elite to a mass system of higher education. Mass higher education will differ from elite higher education not just quantitatively but qualitatively. According to the Trow analysis: mass higher education institutions still prepare elites, but a much broader range of elites that includes the leading strata of all the technical and economic organisations of the society. The emphasis shifts from the shaping of character to the transmission of skills for more specific technical elite roles. Under mass higher education, education becomes more modular, marked by semistructured sequences of courses, increasingly earning unit credits (the unit of exchange in modular courses) allowing more flexible combinations of courses and easier access and movement between major fields and indeed among institutions.

Mass systems begin to be more "comprehensive" (the aim of the polytechnics), with more diverse standards, though with some linkages among the several segments of the system that allow mobility of students and staff (still to happen).

Similarly, mass higher education is increasingly shaped by more "democratic" political processes and influenced by "attentive audiences." There are parts of the general public who have special interests and qualifications, and develop a common view about higher education in general or some special aspect, such as the forms and content of technical education (such as the Eric Robinsons). Higher education policies increasingly become subject to the ordinary political processes of interest groups and party programmes (the Labour Party for instance). One kind of attentive audience is the employers of the products of mass higher education, who are interested in the nature of their skills and qualifications. (The Army advertisements are one indication of this.)

Mass higher education in Britain will provoke one major controversy, especially since the basis of policy is fundamentally egalitarian. It will lead almost certainly to a conflict between universities and polytechnics. As can already be seen in the polytechnics, egalitarians and liberals—and on most issues I count myself as one of them—will insist on a levelling upward—the same salaries in polytechnics as in universities and the same opportunities for research, with a concomitant loss of commitment on the part of polytechnics to the disadvantaged and to their local communities. (The Houghton Report either says: "Sorry, you can't do research but you can have the same salaries," or, more dangerously, it will add to the demand for polytechnics to ape universities.) No society, however, can afford a system of higher education for 20 to 30 percent of the 18-to 20-year-old age group at the same costs that it tolerated for an elite system. There cannot be 75 Oxfords or 75 major centres of research. If they succeed, therefore, the egalitarians, as Trow argues, will force a levelling down in costs and perhaps in quality, as well as a restraint on expansion, which precisely the same pressures will not allow to happen.

Although it is not often realised, Britain has, in fact, anticipated the demand of a mass system for a diversity of institutions, meeting a diversity of student needs and fulfilling a variety of functions. This is the much criticised dual or binary system, enunciated originally by Mr Crosland, of an autonomous university sector alongside a complementary non-university sector, under more direct social control, catering for full- and part-time students studying by night or day, on courses ranging from the Ordinary National Certificate and A-levels to higher degrees. Alongside this, moreover, is the Open University, a world pioneering effort at extending adult education, which is already involved in recurrent education.

So Britain already has, either working successfully already or at least working embryonically, most of the features of diversity and flexibility demanded by the transition to a mass system: and its evolution over the next ten to 20 years will probably confirm the dual system, (with the Government acting as a quasi-Higher Education Commission) and seek to strengthen and expand it. Universities will come to see that the dual system is the best protection of their traditional functions of scholarship and research. As the Thatcher White Paper said: "A minority (of sixth formers) wish to continue for its own sake the study in depth of a specialised subject to the top of their bent. It is crucial for the world of scholarship, research and invention that their needs should be met. This has always been a leading function of the universities and *must* remain so." There could be no clearer commitment from the Government than that.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

It would be foolhardy to predict all the detailed directions in which British higher education is likely to move in the next two decades. Some of the general directions in which it will move are nevertheless fairly certain.

Spending on universities in the sixties grew twice as fast as spending on schools and a university student costs the nation roughly £1400 to £1500 a year compared with about £300 a child at primary school costs, or £600 for a sixth former. There are other urgent priorities in social policy and there is a growing view that equality of opportunity may be better served by spending more on housing and other social services than on education. So the major restraint is going to be money. There just will not be the money available to expand at the same standards as in the past. There will therefore be a constant search for economies throughout the system, which

is why university expansion will be held back, more colleges of education will be merged with polytechnics, more students will go to their local university or polytechnic, the staff-student ratio will deteriorate, and the use of educational technology will grow much faster than in the past decade. So will the habit of delaying entry to higher education, and enabling more adults to enter in their twenties or early thirties. Shorter courses, such as the Diploma of Higher Education or variants of the Pippard scheme, will also be officially encouraged.

Student aspirations, the climate of the times (and some political pressure) will slowly ensure that there is more emphasis on broader courses of general education. One recent exponent of this view, which was emphasised in the Grimond Report, was Professor Dahrendorf, who said last month in his fifth Reith Lecture that the central task of education was not simply to produce spare parts for the economic machine, but to develop human abilities by opening them up for their own sake, rather than tailoring them to alleged requirements. "That was why the educational preparation of young people should be wide rather than narrow, general rather than specialised, and, above all, not too long," he argued.

Another view is that universities are discipline-oriented and the specialist is king, whereas society is mission-oriented and the non-specialist and synthesiser is king. Students will want a resolution of this contradiction and if they do not get it from universities they will turn to the polytechnics. Unit-based, modular courses, perhaps with some vocational cast, but which allow students to take the courses *they* want, will flourish. There will also be more emphasis on transferability, both of credits and between institutions.

Society, since it will be paying such huge sums to maintain

universities as autonomous institutions, will want some reassurance from them that they are not retreating behind their ivory towers (which is, of course, a caricature, but one that is believed). Only last year, the Minister for Higher Education appealed to universities to be more outward-looking and said:

> "I hope that autonomy will never be interpreted as meaning the isolation of each university not only from every other but from the wider system of education. Nor should academic freedom be construed as the doctrine that academics have no responsibility to society."

Eventually (perhaps after the North Sea Oil starts to flow), there will be advances in adult education. The further education sector will strengthen its invaluable work, the Open University will expand and develop its role in recurrent education, universities and polytechnics will expand their work in short post-experience and in-service retraining courses, and some modest support will be given to the proposals of the Russell Report, probably by establishing a Development Council for Adult Education. So many factors—opportunity denied at 15, 16, and 17, the complexities of modern society, and increased leisure, to name only a few—are working in its favour that the demand for an expansion of adult education will swell. Almost three-quarters of the adult population left school at the minimum leaving age; three-fifths of today's adults received their schooling before the leaving-age was raised to fifteen; better opportunities for technical education and the broadening of entry into further and higher education came too late to benefit them; and the fresh approaches to education that are transforming many schools, notably primary schools, with whole new dimensions of educational experience, are unknown and inaccessible to all but today's children.

As the Russell Report said—and said eloquently:

> "It cannot be in the interests of justice or the efficient use of human resources that numbers of our fellow citizens now find themselves too late at the gates of wider opportunity, and with no further recourse. *Educationally we are still Two Nations, and among the educational 'have-nots' the needs are vast.*"

Governments will not be able to resist this argument for long.

It is in such steady, undramatic, pragmatic—but cumulatively spectacular—directions that British higher education will develop: steady expansion, a constant search for economy, more detailed scrutiny by the Government, the introduction of some form of regional oversight of development in the two sectors, and adaptation on the part of the institutions to accept new tasks, directed in particular to social justice for adults, accompanied by innovations in degree courses and a greater use of technology.

Although by 1985, there will still be a dual system of universities and polytechnics, the links between the sectors will be still closer, as will the opportunities to transfer between them. Universities will be a smaller, but still protected, part of the system and the polytechnics will be stronger, more self-confident, and much more comprehensive institutions. Still, though, the great majority of the population—the 'have-nots' will leave school at 16 or 17.

Above all, the major feature of the next decade will be the transition from an elite to a mass system. It will involve an often painful readjustment in relationships throughout the system. Changes of degree will become changes of kind.

Since there is no agreement about the Good Society, and so about aims and content (as the debate since Robbins indicates), the mandate for the pragmatist is to create a variety of institutions which can fulfil a variety of functions: and the vision of the directions in which the system should move in the Thatcher White Paper subsequently confirmed by the Labour Government–towards greater diversity and greater fairness between the sectors as well as more social justice–is certainly right for the present era of upheaval and uncertainty.

The advances that have led to universal primary and secondary education are already encroaching on further and higher education. One concomitant of this vision is that higher education will not all be 'higher' as it is now understood. Universities and the polytechnics will be the highest of the higher–but they will be surrounded by institutions serving all sorts of different needs and purposes, with all sorts of standards and lengths of courses. What we shall be talking about in 1985 is a system of post-school education, incorporating higher education. This is the direction in which systems of higher education throughout the world are already moving and British higher education is set in the same direction. I do not think that it is a movement that can be stopped. The momentum behind it is now great. It is an imperative.

> "In the conditions of modern life, the rule is absolute: the race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed . . . Today we maintain ourselves. Tomorrow science will have moved forward yet one more step, and there will be no appeal from the judgment which will be pronounced on the uneducated."

That was said by A.N. Whitehead nearly 60 years ago. It is true today–and it will be even truer tomorrow.

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The International Council for Educational Development (ICED) is an international non-profit association of persons with a common concern for the future of education and its role in social and economic development.

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